

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 14521 161411Z

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SUBJECT: FURTHER PROCLAMATION ON PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS

1. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA OF DEC. 14 CARRIED PMAC STATEMENT AND PROCLAMATION SPECIFYING THE DUTIES, FUNCTIONS, AND POWERS OF PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS. LENGTHY INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FILLED WITH USUAL SOCIALIST JARGON CONDEMNING REACTIONARIES WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO INTERFERE WITH REVOLUTION, ETC., AND PRAISING PEASANTS AND OTHER PROGRESSIVES FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIALISM. STATEMENT ALSO URGES THE FORMATION OF COOPERATIVES AND INFORMS PEASANTS THAT THEY WILL BE GIVEN ADDITIONAL POLITICAL POWER AND THE LATITUDE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS.

2. THE PROCLAMATION CONSISTS OF 59 ARTICLES. OUR UN-OFFICIAL SUMMARY TRANSLATION STATES THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCLAMATION AS FOLLOWS:

TO GIVE PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS LEGAL STANDING; TO DEFINE THE DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS IN ADDITION TO WHAT IS GIVEN IN THE RURAL LAND PROCLAMATION; TO MAKE THE PEASANTS SELF-ADMINISTERING; TO GIVE PEASANTS CONTROL OVER THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATIONS; TO GIVE THE PEASANTS A SOCIALIST IDEOLOGICAL BASE IN ORDER TO COMBAT FEUDALISM AND IMPERIALISM; TO PROVIDE

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 14521 161411Z

GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION BY PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS OF

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS, COOPERATIVES, PEACEKEEPING FORCES AND JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES. GUIDELINES THEN FOLLOW FOR FORMULATING 2-10 MAN COOPERATIVE SERVICE ASSOCIATIONS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO MARKET AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, LOAN MONEY, PROVIDE IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, AND PERFORM OTHER CO-OPERATIVE FUNCTIONS.

3. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION OF PEASANTS PEACEKEEPING FORCES ARE ALSO PROVIDED, INCLUDING GUIDELINES FOR PEASANT ASSOCIATION JUDICIARY COMMITTEES. BRIEFLY, PEASANTS' TRIBUNALS ARE TO HAVE JURISDICTION OVER CIVIL CASES INVOLVING UP TO ETH.\$100; ON PROPERTY OR FARMS WITHIN THE PEASANT ASSOCIATION'S AREA; ON DIVISION OF FAMILY PROPERTY IN DIVORCE CASES AND FOR OTHER TRANSACTIONS WITH OR WITHIN THE PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS. TRIBUNALS ARE EMPOWERED TO JUDGE AND SENTENCE GUILTY PARTIES TO A MAXIMUM OF 15 DAYS FORCED LABOR, UP TO THREE MONTHS IMPRISONMENT, OR TO LEVY FINES UP TO ETH.\$300. PEASANT TRIBUNALS WILL BE UNDER THE REVIEW AND JURISDICTION OF WOREDA AND AWRAJA TRIBUNALS.

4. PROCLAMATION FURTHER PROVIDES FOR REVOLUTIONARY ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES AND SPECIFIES MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND POWERS OF THESE COMMITTEES. THERE WILL BE WOREDA AND AWRAJA DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES IN THE HIERARCHY ABOVE THE PEASANT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES. THE MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND POWERS OF THESE COMMITTEES AND OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT "PERMANENT COMMITTEE" ARE ALSO SPECIFIED.

5. COMMENT: PRIOR TO THIS PROCLAMATION THE ONLY GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION AND OPERATION OF PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS WERE GIVEN IN THE RURAL LAND REFORM PROCLAMATION AND THE ZEMETCHA HANDBOOK. THESE WERE COMPLETELY INADEQUATE. WE DO NOT YET HAVE THE OFFICIAL ENGLISH VERSION OF THE PROCLAMATION, AND WILL COMMENT FURTHER IF NECESSARY WHEN WE SEE THE TEXT. MEANWHILE, IT IS CLEAR THAT GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN GREATLY NEEDED TO STANDARDIZE AND LEGITIMIZE THE OPERATIONS OF PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS WHICH UP TO NOW HAVE FUNCTIONED VIRTUALLY INDEPENDENT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 14521 161411Z

LY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND, IN MANY CASES, IN A RATHER ARBITRARY FASHION. DECENTRALIZATION APPEARS TO BE ANOTHER PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THIS DECREE WHICH ALSO GIVES THE PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT MARKETING FUNCTIONS. INTERESTINGLY, PROCLAMATION AT SEVERAL POINTS SPECIFIES PROMINENT ROLE FOR ZEMETCHA STUDENTS WHO ARE PRESCRIBED MEMBERS OF CERTAIN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES. THIS MAY INDICATE AN INTENTION TO INSTITUTIONALIZE OR AT

LEAST PROLONG THE ZEMETCHA. THIS WOULD BE IN MARKED
CONTRAST TO OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING.

6. EMBASSY WILL POUCH OFFICIAL VERSION OF PROCLAMATION
WHEN OBTAINED.
HUMMEL

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